Rev. T.A. Groce – July 9, 1958 (from typewritten manuscript)

After my conversion in my early teens I joined the Milford Baptist Church in Greenville County, South Carolina near our home then O'Neal, South Carolina. My father and mother were loyal church members and being in Sunday school under the teaching of a consecrated Christian woman, Mrs. W. H. James, I felt more and more the call to the ministry but since I did not have a college education, I tried to push it aside. So from one place to another, working here and there, I was never satisfied and my plans would never work out. At the age of 21 on November 15, 1899, I was married to Elizabeth Hunt, Daughter of the late R. G. Hunt of Dacusville, South Carolina, Pickens County. She was a Methodist - mind, body and soul. After our first son, Robert, was born on July 29, 1900, we moved to Atlanta, Georgia in September of that year. I went to work with the A & P Grocery at 106 Whitehall Street. After leaving the grocery line, we came back to Greenville, South Carolina and I went to work with the J. A. Bull Company, a large grocery store, in the fall of 1905. We moved to Travelers Rest, South Carolina where I was in charge of a large general store owned by B. M. Lankford and Son. Here again, through the goodness and prayers of my wife, I got interested in the church and Sunday school.

The Travelers Rest Methodist Church (Rev. R. T. Bryant was the pastor) was just across the highway and railroad from our home and the store. Again feeling the urge to the ministry, I tried to compromise with the Lord. I said, "I will do any work in the church I can do." The longer I attended church and Sunday school, the more interested I was in the work of the church and the call to preach. I said, "How can I, Lord, with a wife and three sons?" The third quarterly conference was due in August and Harold was born August 10, 1906. The quarterly meeting was held in our church in August 1907. I was recommended for a license to preach.

In October 1907 I was sent as a supply pastor to Monaghan and Woodside Cotton Mills. We lived in a Company house at Monaghan and worshiped in one of the Company houses fitted up for Sunday school and church services. Here I found some of the finest and most loyal Methodists to be found anywhere: Mr. and Mrs. L. P. Hollis, Mr. and Mrs. Jubin, Mr. and Mrs. C. T. Fallin, Mr. and Mrs. Sid Anderson, Mrs. Vorehise Scot, Y.W.C.A. and many others. How did they put up with poor me? They were so patient and kind.

My Presiding Elder, Rev. W. M. Duncan, was so wonderful and helpful. He gave me a lot of good books that had been left with him by Bishop Capers for some young preacher. Brother Duncan Said, "I want you to have them." As I said, we lived at Monaghan Mills and it was only two miles to Woodside and on a carline. So we did not have to have horse and buggy. There was only one car at Monaghan and that one belonged to the superintendent of the mill.

We had the privilege of serving these good people for two years. The last year during the summer months, on account of so much malaria, my wife and the children had to rent a house and stay in the country near her father's home in Pickens County, and owing to my wife's health I was advised by our doctor to move to the mountains.

So in the fall of 1909, I attended Western North Carolina Conference at Hickory, North Carolina - Bishop James Atkins presiding. When the appointments were read, I was read out for Jonathan Creek, Waynesville District. I at once decided I would find this place and go there and look it over before going back to my family in Greenville, South Carolina. So I traveled by train to Asheville, from Asheville to Waynesville, North Carolina and out to Jonathan Creek to the parsonage. Near the parsonage lived the Church School Superintendent, Mr. E. H. Howell, his good wife, Aunt Jo, and their son, Bob. Here I spent the night. My! What a wonderful, good Christian country home - good food, good feather bed and what hospitality.

Next morning we walked out to the parsonage, just a plain house on a lovely spot in that beautiful Jonathan Creek Valley. Uncle Erastus Howell, as he was called, said, "Now Brother Groce, you will find something here you will not find anywhere else in the Western North Carolina Conference. We furnish the horse and saddle." My, how good I felt, thinking of my wife and four sons; and having to move, I said, "Surely the Lord is with us." So back to Greenville to get ready to move. On the morning we were leaving, Brother L. P. Hollis, Y.M.C.A. Secretary and Chairman of my Board, knocked at the door. I opened it. He said, "Here is a check that Mr. Parker, President of the Mill, sent you thanking you for your good work here and trusting you can use it in your own good way. The check was for $100.00. A hundred dollar check then meant more than $250.00 now.

Now my story on the check for $100.00. After we moved into our parsonage, Bob Howell and I came over to Asheville and went to T. S. Morrison's. Bob knew Mr. Pegram, then a salesman for Morrison's, so he waited on us. We bought a Babcock Top buggy. Mr. Pegram asked Mr. Morrison (both now deceased), "What are you going to charge the preacher for this buggy?" He said, "$100.00 less 10%. I said come on out my check.

The buggy was shipped to Waynesville. When it arrived, Bob Howell drove me to Waynesville, leading the big, 1200 pound black horse named Mack. We went to Miller's harness shop in Waynesville, had the horse fitted up to set of harness. He said, "Now go to the depot, hook the horse to the buggy, come back here and I will make any adjustments in the harness needed. Now, Mr. Groce, you are ready to ride."

"How much do I owe you, Mr. Miller?"

“$10.00 less 10%.”

“Now, my dear sir, you cannot live and drive in these mountains without a lap robe. I owe you another dollar and I'm going to give you this $2.50 robe."

"Thank you sir."

Someone kept saying, "Preacher, the Lord is with you. I said, "He surely was with the check."

Then we made our way to the depot, leaving Greenville in the morning, arriving in Waynesville in the afternoon. We were met there by some of our members from the Shady Grove Methodist

Church. One big man by the name of Dave Boyd (Big Dave, they called him) who lived in Waynesville, said to me, "You must be the new preacher for Jonathan Creek."

"Yes, sir, I am and hope we will have a great year together."

"Well," said Brother Boyd, "you will find some wonderfully fine people out there; the young people have religion and the old folks the pocket books." Later I found he was about right.

Then, in 2 buggies they drove us to the home of Uncle Erastus Howell where we stayed until our parsonage furnishings came in and the good women got the parsonage in living condition.

There were four churches in the circuit. I preached at Shady Grove on Second Sunday at 11:00 a.m. and Fourth Sunday night at 7:30 p.m.; Dellwood on First Sunday at 11:00 a.m.; Maggie on Fourth Sunday at 11:00 a.m.; Cataloochee Palmers Chapel on Third Sunday at 11:00 a.m. This church was across Cove Creek Mountain, 15 miles from the parsonage - Shady Grove, 1 miles; Dellwood, 4; and Maggie 10 miles away.

Our conferences then were held much later in the fall. So, by the time I made my move and was ready to fill my appointments, it was now the Second Sunday in November. So to Shady Grove Church I went with my wife and 4 boys. My, how my wife and family did love Jonathan Creek and the people on the pastoral charge here at Shady Grove. My, the folks - Howels and Howels, Allisons, Sheltons, Partins, Carvers, Owens, Leatherwoods, Boyds - I am too old now to remember all of them, but I loved them.

Then Dellwood Church - the Campbells, Boyds, James, Sheltons, Cambrons, Henrys. Then on to Maggie - what a wonderful fine group, small membership but so loyal - Campbells and Campbells, Boyds, Ketteners, Carpenters, Evans, and others.

Now to Cataloochee on Saturday before the Third Sunday - early Saturday morning Uncle Erastus Howell came out to the parsonage. It was a very cold day, cloudy and snowing. Uncle Erastus said, "Now, Brother Groce, don't stop over there until you get to Uncle Hiram Caldwell's. You must spend the first night with his family, or he will not go to church." So, fixing the storm apron and our heavy robe, then a lighted lantern under the robe, T.A. Jr.,7 years old, and I left our folks. I felt that making that trip every month was going to take more religion than I had, but after the rich experience I was ready to go. So we drove up to Uncle Hiram Caldwell's barn. He was in the barnyard. I said, "Is this Uncle Hiram?"

"Yes that's me.

"Well Uncle Erastus Howell told me not to stop until I got to your house and here I am.

"Well, the best man in Haywood County sent you here. Get out and take your boy on to the house; you will find Lizzie there."

The home was across the road and creek from the by the barn and a narrow boardwalk across the creek so long it would spring up and down, and since T.A. Jr. got too warm under the robe from

the heat of the lantern, I didn't know whether to let him wade the creek or walk the foot log. We got in about 4:30 p.m. Aunt Lizzie Caldwell was a wonderful, good Christian woman and a good cook. By the time her family was in and supper was ready, it was 8:00 o'clock. T.A. and I had been on the road four hours, snowing on us all the way, blowing blue snow, so we were good and hungry. My, how good that food did taste. Uncle Hiram looked over at me and said, "Preacher don't hurt yourself, I said, we expect to have breakfast in the morning. "Good, but I might not be here; I just live one day at a time." Well by and by with supper over and after a long chat before an open fire we read from the Bible, had prayer and retired.

Next morning after breakfast, while getting ready to go to church Uncle Hiram said, "Now preacher, the latch string hangs on the outside of the door - come back every time you feel like it. Lizzie and I will be glad to have you, but visit all the other members and make it as light on me as you can. Another thing I want to say to you, most preachers have mischievous, bad children. We have had some to come here who would turn over the milk in the spring- house, get on the beds with their feet, prowl into everything in the house, but your boy is one of the best I have ever seen for a preacher's boy. To tell you the truth, I like him better than I do you." We then went to church where we met Caldwells and Caldwells, Palmers and Palmers, Woodys, and others. Then we went on down the creek to Jarvis Palmer's where we had a good dinner, and on home.

Our salary for the year was $500.00. The charge had never paid their conference collection in full. That year**,** 1910, everything was paid in full, and how those good people did pound us. They kept us in most all the groceries and hog shoulders - hams, side bacon, corn and hay for the horse and cow.

So when we had made our first round and preached in all the churches, the weather was very cold; yet, we had good and large congregations in most all the churches. During the hard, cold winter months it was necessary to do a lot of the pastoral work and preaching appointments on horseback. I had a long raincoat over my top coat, leggings and overshoes. In making my trips to Palmers Chapel over at Cataloochee, when I would go up Caldwell Fork, I had to cross the creek 7 times. One winter it was frozen over. I would walk and lead my horse so he would not break the ice. I was afraid he would slip and fall. When on horseback I would ride the paths on Cove Creek Mountain in order to make time. One trip I made during the winter and in a snow storm, in the gap of the mountain where the snow had drifted, the snow was up to the horse's belly and he was a big horse, as I said, weighing 1200 pounds.

At the Shady Grove Church, we had a large number of older people, but a much larger group of young men and women. Near the church was a large school building teaching from primary through the 11th grade. Since there was only a grammar school at Cataloochee, a large number of their fine young men and women would come to Jonathan Creek to finish high school. At the Shady Grove Church there was a fine group of young people. During my first year, I guess I was more concerned about getting all the conference collections in full for the circuit as a whole had never paid out, and so that year we paid out in full. So the second year, I was determined by the

help of the good Lord to be more concerned about the Salvation of Souls and worked to that end up to August. We began our revival then, called protracted meeting, which by the second week went into a great revival - a real old fashioned revival - several men in their 70's were converted and a large number of young people. There were 26 young people who would pray in public during the meetings. Cottage prayer meetings were held and there were a number of conversions made in the homes. Two young men publicly, fully committed themselves to God and His service and would go into any service they could render where the Lord wanted them to go.

A little later that year, at our District Conference held at Leicester, David V. Howell and Floyd B. Shelton, from Shady Grove Church were licensed to preach. After finishing their education, David Howell took work in Western North Carolina Conference and did a wonderful work for a number of years from 1915 to May 1942, when he died in Charlotte. Floyd B. Shelton went to Emory and Henry Va., then to Emory University, Atlanta; then joined Holston Conference and served well as a pastor and District Superintendent until his death in 1956.

I mention these two, but along with them have come many others from their mountain rural churches who have filled well their places in the churches where they lived. I am glad I had a little part in seeing six young men out of churches and meetings I have held who have gone into the ministry in our church and two into the Baptist Church and one into the Presbyterian.

Well, along with some of the wonderful fine, rich experiences came some of the other kind. I had during summer months an appointment on Hemphill at the Hemphill schoolhouse, just a small one-room building, so I tried out one week's preaching every evening. There was very good interest and several conversions. I had one bighearted, old sinner friend, who would come and stand at the window and listen. I went to him and said, "Bill, old fellow, I want you to come into the house and get interested in yourself." He said, "Preacher, I have a well-seasoned, dogwood maul and if you will let me come in with it, everytime one of them old men or gals gets religion, I will hit them in the head so they can go on to glory while the spell is on for I have seen them do that every year**."**

I had some great experiences in and about the little Hemphill schoolhouse. Down on Cove Creek at the foot of the mountain, there was another small schoolhouse where I went every other Sunday afternoon for a church service. We had one of our Methodist families living near this school house by the name of Uncle Kimsey Howell. He had three sons and their families were Methodist. The Methodists and Baptists took time about during summer for services. I was told that after a revival meeting there that there were several persons who wanted to join the Baptist Church and be immersed. So the time was set, and on this Sunday afternoon, the preacher was sick with a cold and asked one of his deacons to baptize the candidates. The preacher said he would read the Scriptures and have the prayer. The deacon said, "I don't know what to say." The preacher said, "Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." The deacon went into the creek with his first person. As he put him under, he said, "I baptize you in the name of the

Father," raised him up, "I baptize you in the name of the Son", raised him up, "I baptize you in the name of ----- preacher what did you say that other man's name of name was?"

I was in a meeting at Dellwood Methodist Church and Rev. Tom P. Jamison was doing the preaching. One night a good old friend of mine was there; he was in his 70's and had never made a profession or joined any church. Tom knew him also so he went back in the congregation to talk with him and asked him if he wanted him to pray with him for himself. He shook his head. "No, Tom," said Uncle _____ "you are going to hell if you go on living as you are. You worship the almighty dollar, and if you don't change your way, you are going to hell as straight as a blue bird can fly to its nest." Uncle _____ said "You reckon so, Tommie ?" Then he knelt down and the preacher prayed for him there by the pew. The morning we were moving from the Jonathan Creek parsonage, this man came by and said, "Groce, my friend, wherever you go tell folk not to live as I have, for I have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost." I said, "I don't think so for you still want to come to church."

"I know but when I moved here I said I wanted to be the richest man in the valley. I neglected my family - here I am living on one part of my farm, my wife and daughters on another part. Now, all that mountain belongs to me and I have cattle, money in banks, and I would give all I have of this world's goods if I were a Christian. You are the one preacher that has been interested in me and my family and I love you."

This man died in the winter of 1935 and I was called for his funeral but was in Florida at that time.

In all the churches on this Jonathan Creek charge we had some wonderful revival meetings, especially the second year. I mean the old fashioned revivals - people got happy and shouted. We would sing those great old hymns: "Amazing Grace", "When I Can Read My Title Clear", "I Am Bound For The Promised Land", etc., and what experiences. I went home with a young woman one day from church during a meeting. She said her mother was not able to come to church and she wanted me to go with her for dinner, 12:00 noon. We got there about 12:30 and the girl, Grace, said to me, "The chicken got out of the coop you will have to run it down." So I did. What a chase for a summer day. By 2:30 p.m. we were ready to eat dinner.

Just after coming to North Carolina I was in a home up in a Cove and we went in to dinner. After a little while one of the family asked me to hand the spuds.

"What are spuds?"

"Irish potatoes, thank you. "

A little later I looked and back of the cook stove were a lot of things on strings. I said, "Sister Smith, what are those things?" She said, "Leather britches, thank you." So now I know know - spuds, leather britches and pickle beans.

I was in a wonderful revival meeting at Laurel Hill the year before I moved. The pastor, Rev. Charles Curtis, had a carbuncle on his back and when the folks got to shouting, he would back up

in a corner of the church until he got to praising the Lord and what a power he was. He knew the Lord and he knew how to pray, but he had to protect his carbuncle. One day, when an old man, 70 years of age, and his three sons, were converted, I thought they would shake the little church down. One great, big fellow grabbed me and his big, strong arms hugged me so tightly, I almost passed out. I said, "Pete you liked to have killed me." He said, "Brother Groce, I was just loving you."

During this meeting as we gathered in front of the church one morning (Then you could have a revival meeting at 10:00 or 10:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.) this Pete was in the churchyard with several of us. When Brother Curtis, the pastor, came up, shook hands with us all and said to Pete, "How do you feel spiritually, Pete?"

"Well, thank God, I am wholly sanctified, but I haven't a speck of religion. "

I sat by a little three-year old boy at the table of a boarding house at a cotton mill for dinner one day, and the mother asked me to pass the chicken. The little fellow said, "Mamma, I want the chicken head."

"I didn't cook the head, son."

"Why, mamma, did he have the sore head?"

On the Jonathan Creek charge, we had a fine garden spot just back of the parsonage. Believe it or not, the corn grew so tall that I could not reach the ears of corn. My wife's father visited us in 1910 and he was a tall man. He said, "I will have to get a box or stepladder to pull a mess of corn for dinner." The cabbage would grow so large the heads would not go into a water bucket. Then we had a cow and the cow pasture was the front yard that ran to the branch. My last year, 1911, we bought a Berkshire pig. That fall when we were ready to move to the Mills River charge, we killed and dressed our pig. He netted 308 pounds. We wrapped the hog in a sheet and put it in a freight car with other household goods and shipped them to Horse Shoe, North Carolina. While unloading that car, folks gathered around. One man said to me, "I have never seen a Methodist preacher who could grow a hog that size, but I guess with five boys you need a big one." "And look", said one man, "what cabbage heads." Yes, we moved several heads of cabbage.

When we got into the parsonage, my, those Mills River and Horse Shoe folks gave us one more big pounding - all kinds of canned goods and groceries and in this pounding was a bag of cabbage, Henderson County cabbage, and how sweet they were. Haywood County can grow them larger, but Henderson County can grow the best. Well, here I had to buy a horse. I had my buggy. So I bought the horse from the preacher I followed and the horse had been on the circuit two years and knew all the churches. When I would turn him into the churchyard, he would go to his regular tree. You had to hitch Mac, the horse, to a swinging limb or to a sapling that would give or he would break his halter. On the Mills River Circuit I had 5 churches: Mills River Chapel, Horse Shoe, Shaws Creek, Averys Creek and Sardis. I preached at Mills River on the First and Third Sundays at 11:00 a.m.; Averys Creek at 3:00 p.m. and Sardis at 7:30 p.m. On the Second and Fourth Sundays

I preached in Horse Shoe at 11:00 a.m. and Shaws Creek at 3:00 p.m. In the summer months I preached at Horse Shoe at 7:30 p.m. That year the salary was $600.00. Dr. Dan Atkins was my Presiding Elder**.** So that fall he moved us to Fairview, North Carolina. His only reason was he wanted a younger man at Fairview and an older man could do the work at Mills River. It was a mistake, but move I must.

So I secured three teams with good men to move us to Fairview. We got into Fairview about 8:00 p.m. and it was pouring rain. Several of the good women had prepared supper. After the wagons were unloaded we had our evening meal along with the three men. Then a good-hearted man, Mr. Long, gave us barn and stable room for the teams and room for the men and took care of them for the night.

Owing to the condition of the parsonage, my family went back to Greenville and to my wife's father, Mr. R. G. Hunt, Dacusville, South Carolina, Pickens County. I told the Parsonage Committee that I could not afford for my family to stay in the parsonage until it was put in living condition. When they had gone inside and found out why, they said, "We don't blame you. We did not know conditions like this did exist." Now I told them, "I am here to carry on and fill my appointments and visit the members." They worked out a plan. One church furnished the parsonage; one church repaired and painted the house; one church put a range in place of the little cookstove; one church built a barn for the horse and cow and a buggy shed. Then they rented me a house and I moved into it. By March 15th from November 1st to March 15th, I had a new barn and a house painted inside and out and furnished, and I had a wonderful year.

On this circuit I had four churches: Sharon, Bethany, Tweeds Chapel and Pattys Chapel, which was then the Fletcher Church about two miles from Fletcher. There was a loyal band in all these churches. Many of the older people are gone. Brother J. C. Sales is still living and was always a leader in the Fletcher Church. My salary was $700.00 for a wife and five sons. If it hadn't been for some old-fashioned poundings and a good garden I don't know how we would have made it. But my wife knew how to cut the corners in more ways than one. Of course, a good milk cow meant much to our family.

The next November, we were sent to the Sulphur Springs Circuit in Candler, North Carolina. Again wagon moving time. Two of the boys drove the cow. Fairview was 12 miles from Asheville and Candler 9 miles from Asheville. So when the boys, with the cow, got to West Asheville, right in front of the then Horrace Wells home, now the Grace Baptist Church, the cow decided she was tired and wanted to rest. She lay down in the street; the boys tried to get her up but no move. They twisted her tail, no move. So a man came by and lighted a newspaper and put it under the cow. She did come up and in high gear! She ran through Horrace Wells' yard, into his barnyard and there the boys got hold of the cow and made their way on to the parsonage at Candler.

Well, the news had reached the parsonage that the preacher and his family would be in about 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. Some of the good women had the house in order and supper was on the way. Mrs. R. J. Gaston had been over most of the afternoon with others getting things in shape. So she went

home and sent her daughter over to carry on. She told her that she left the rice on the table and to put it on to cook, enough for a good meal, and remember Mr. and Mrs. Groce have five boys and you know how growing boys eat. So she picked up the package of rice and poured it into the boiler and in a few minutes it was boiling and covering the top of the stove. Four pounds of rice was too much for the boiler. One woman said,"Lawd, what will we do? They are driving into the yard and rice is over the kitchen. "

Well, after dinner was over we had a good laugh; for the cow had a singed belly and the kitchen plenty of burned rice. Just a few days later what poundings we had. There were 8 churches on this charge; Montmorenci, Acton, Oak Hill, Asbury, Snow Hill, Pleasant Hill, Laurel Hill and Pisgah - preaching every Sunday three times: 11:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. and 7:30p.m.

For the first two years I used horse and buggy, then, I bought a used Ford, a 1914 model, in the spring of 1916. The first time I tried to drive it, I did get from the house into the road, started toward Candler; Hominy Creek was on my right so I stayed clear, but the devilish thing started up the steep bank on my left. When it rolled back into the road, I said, "I'm done with you, Mr. Ford." About that time C. D. Mallonee came along. I told him the story and he could see for himself. He said, "You get in. I will drive you around and then help you to drive." The car was already headed toward Hominy so he drove over to the road that now leads up to our country home and turned around and put me under the steering wheel, and I made four or five miles an hour and was able with his help to drive back into the parsonage yard. All our roads then were country dirt roads. The only Macadam road was from West Asheville to Hominy Creek.

Now talk about poundings, for weeks we had them, from all the churches - hams, shoulders, side bacon, groceries to fill the pantry, irish potatoes, cabbage**,** etc; then, on trips to my churches, wherever I went for a night or dinner, they would give us preserves, jelly and canned fruits.

Of course, this was during horse and buggy days. My first charge in the Western North Carolina Conference, as stated before, was in the mountains with horse and buggy. Many times I rode horseback in this work, then on the Mills River charge and Fairview, then two years on Sulphur Springs charge. Of four years, I used horse and buggy for two years. So when these days were over, they did not feed my Ford like they did my horse, but I could make better time, if I did not have a puncture or blow out, and when I did, as a rule I had a blow out in my sermon; for sometimes there was a different subject that presented itself and it would take a lot of praying to get the devil behind you. And how many times, with my Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes on and on my way to church for the afternoon appointment, a quick April shower would pour down and before you could get the curtains up on the car, you were good and wet, but on to church and to preach for as a Methodist I had a good old fashioned sprinkling.

During revival meetings, in order to hold meetings in all the churches in those horse and buggy days, it was necessary to be away from home much of the time, and that time was used in visiting. You would sleep in one home and have breakfast, preach at 10:00 or 10:30 a.m. and go home with some other member for dinner, visit in the afternoon and get supper with another family.

One night during a revival the good wife and mother of several children said, "You must go home with us tonight. My husband is interested in the meeting and I want you to talk with him. So I did and when we got in and all got through talking about the meeting and the real need of a revival, I said, "Brother _____I am so glad you are interested in your spiritual life."

"Well, you know I love the church and I am a member, but I am not living right."

"Brother, were you ever converted?"

"Oh yes, I know I was."

"How do you know it?"

"Well I liked to have busted wide open."

"Now Brother _____there was feeling for you," I said sure enough.

Sometimes you would sit up so late that you really wanted to sleep late, but when you heard that coffee mill you had better get up. That was my morning bell, for then you had to grind your own coffee and most of the time it was Arbuckles'.

I had one good old fashioned home on Cane Creek - just husband and wife, well fixed, large farm, good land and lots of chickens. I said to him early in the year, "Brother, if you and your wife will begin now and save and sell all the eggs your hens lay on Sunday and put it in the

budget try it from now until Easter Sunday."

"Well we will try it."

It so happened that I spent the night before Easter with this Brother and I had Brother J. H. West who was then Superintendent of the Children's Home with me. So next morning, Sunday morning, we were seated at the breakfast table and had returned thanks when the Brother said, "Brother Groce, looks like my wife has cooked all her eggs, (they had some hard boiled, some fried, some poached) but look over there under the sideboard." I looked and there was a one- half bushel basket full of Sunday eggs.

"I have already sold one basket full. I believe to my soul that all my hens wait until Sunday to lay and then they shell them down."

That year, that family paid more on the church budget than they had paid in the last four years. On this same circuit at Tweeds Chapel, we had a wonderful revival a large number of professions and several wanted to be baptized by immersion; so, we had to find a deep place in Cane Creek. When all was in readiness, I was in the water and it was not waist deep and when a 6'2" man came in I looked him up and down, I said, "Brother, you will have to get down on your knees" and he did and I put him under, but it took all my strength to get him up.

After my 4 years at Candler Conference (1917) I was appointed to Mt. Zion Church in Cornelius. We moved in November and by the time we got in and ready for work, bad weather was on us. It began snowing and freezing right on through the winter.

I had only been on the work for a few months when my Presiding Elder, W. A. Newell, and J. T. Mangum, both deceased, wanted me to take training at Blue Ridge, North Carolina to go into the chaplaincy. All the chaplains in World War I were Army Y. M. C. A. chaplains. After my course at Blue Ridge, I was sent to Camp Green, Charlotte, North Carolina. I had followed the late E. M. Hoyle at Mt. Zion. Rev. H. G. Allen, then a single man, was sent to Mr. Zion to finish out the conference year. He boarded with my wife and boys at the parsonage. At the conference in Charlotte (1918) on accountof the "flu" epidemic, the Bishop and Presiding Elders made the appointments. My family moved into the Brevard Street parsonage and boarded the pastor, Rev. L. T. Cordell, for rent. His family was in the mountains living on Haw Creek.

I stayed in service until the Armistice was signed, then was on troop trains, getting the soldiers to their homes until after Christmas. The rest of the conference year I spent with the State Y. M. C. A. doing rehabilitation work, making all the county seats in 16 western North Carolina counties. This was very interesting work, but it kept me away from home so much of the time.

That fall at conference we were sent to Race Street Statesville, where we enjoyed two happy years. Owing to my wife's health we were moved back to the mountains and sent to Andrews, North Carolina. Here we had one real happy year. Bob and T. A. Jr. were in college, Alvin was finishing high school at Candler, Willis and Fred were in school at Andrews. The Baptist preacher, Rev. Smith, was a fox and rabbit I had to hunter, so we went rabbit hunting Thanksgiving. borrow a gun and that Christmas the Chairman of my Board of Stewards, C. W. Brown, gave me a 12-gauge, 6-shot automatic and said to me, "I don't want to hear tell of my preacher borrowing a gun again," and I never did. That summer, the boys were all home and Bob was working with Mr. Latham whooperated a big band sawmill. T. A. Jr. was with the Tannery Company and packed tan bark during their vacation. Alvin had it easy. Miss Frances Cover had a big Hudson car and they had a good time together.

I was told by Dad Tattum while there that if I ever hounds and get into the mountains for some real fun. That fall, Mr. Buckhanan of Sylva, Mr. . J. Keer of Canton, J. Dale Stentz of Lake Junaluska, Mark Boone of Andrews and R. S. Porter of Franklin with Bishop Denny.

I was put on the Waynesville District as District Evangelist to hold meetings in the small circuits and churches. Over and above the offerings in their meetings, these men made the salary up, to a living salary for my family. While on the District my family lived at Candler at the intersection of Beaverdam Road. I was on the district from November until June 1922. When my Presiding Elder and Bishop sent me to Oteen as chaplain, I was the first Methodist chaplain there. At that time there were from 1,200 to 1,400 patients there; more than onethird were Methodist. This work was interesting and I enjoyed it. Sometimes it was very depressing, when so many were passing on.

November 1925, I was sent to Haywood Street, Asheville, where we served for four years and enjoyed our work among those good people. Mr. Otis Green was Chairman of the Board of Stewards for the four years. Mr. H. A. Durham, Sunday school superintendent, president of the Epworth League was while here I war Board of Western North Carolina conference.

It was during my pastorate here that the Bethel Church was sold to the colored people and most all the Bethel members came to Haywood Street. Some few went to Central. In this group was a large number of railroad families. Pulling away from Bethel was not easy for some of them to do for it was where they joined and grew up in the Sunday school and church. Rev. G. C. Brinkman was pastor at that time and Rev. H. C. Sprinkle was the Presiding Elder**.** The parsonage was located at 210 Patton Avenue.

One evening at Haywood Street Church, we were having our checkup meeting for the year, just a few days before the annual conference. The Official Board met in the basement of the church. Hundreds of dollars were placed on the table in checks and cash. No doubt, someone was looking through a window near the sidewalk and making plans for a lift. The next morning one of my sons, Robert, called me and said, "Dad, there is a man in the room. It was about 4:00 a.m. I jumped out of the bed, the man flashed his flashlight in my face and blinded me. I grabbed for his coattail; he ran out of the room into the second floor hall, jumped over the banister and landed on the bottom stairstep and was gone. He got $5.00 out of T. A. Jr.'s pants pocket. When he dropped T. A.'s trousers, the watch in the pocket was what woke Bob up. No doubt, the man thought I had this $800.00 or $900.00, but Mr. J. P. Morgan was treasurer and he had the money and was to give me a check before conference. What do you think of a person who would go to a Methodist parsonage for money? No place for a thief I'm sure.

In the fall of November 1929 we moved to Salisbury Coburn Memorial Church. Here we found a good parsonage and a lovely church. We were told that there was a debt of $20,000 on the church due to the Board of Church Extension, but in a little while I found out that they owed for the pews, windows and a banknote that made it another $20,000. By the time we got all our figures together, the depression was on. A lot of our men worked at Spencer Railroad shops and were being cut off every week, then the furniture plants were doing the same, so with a church budget of $12,000 and a debt of $40,000 what could we do only hope and pray and pray. We did raise our budget and paid for our pews and windows and banknote but that still left $20,000 owing the Church Extension Board. With a low blood pressure and a heavy hard year, I broke under the load. The membership was wonderful to us and if times had been normal, it would have been different. My doctor advised me to come back to the mountains and my Presiding Elder, Dr. H. C. Sprinkle, advised the same. It was wonderful to be working with a man like H. C. Sprinkle. He would get me out once a week to play golf to get me away from the load and strain.

My salary at Coburn Memorial was $3,600.00. Then at conference I was sent to the Acton-Oak Hill and Asbury charge. The parsonage was on Montevista Road. My salary was to be $2,400.00 here. We were met by a goodly number of our members. We spent the first night in R. C.

Crowell's home, then into our parsonage the next day. The morning paper, Asheville Citizen, headlines read Central Bank and Trust Company Closed - later West Asheville Bank and others. salary that year was $1,800.00. During the summer months from the Duke School of religion, we had a young preacher by the name of 0. L. Hathaway as associate pastor. He lived in our home. We loved him and all the church folks loved him; he loved young people. He is now D. S. of Fayetteville District North Carolina Conference.

After one year we moved into our home at Hominy. After our pastorate here we were sent to Asbury Memorial, 1934 and 1935. Owing to my wife's health, the family stayed on in our own home for the Asbury parsonage was small and very old. We then went to Montmorenci, Pleasant Hill (1936-37) and Snow Hill charge where we served until my wife fell and broke her hip while living at our home.

After months it was necessary for me to give up my church work and for one year was in the store with Hugh in the grocery, feed and seed business. After my wife's continued illness and the condition of her hip after keeping a practical nurse with her for 16 months, we sold the store and I gave my time to her until World War II. While she was in a wheel chair for two years we lived on Balsam Avenue with all our rooms on one floor so she could roll from one room to another.

Then when Dr. Henry Sprinkle, Jr. went into the chaplaincy, I was sent to West Asheville Methodist Church to finish out the conference year. Here I enjoyed 3-1/2 months with these fine folks. At West Asheville now Trinity Methodist Church, August 16, 1942 to conference October 20, 1942, Dr. Henry Sprinkle pastor was called to the chaplaincy.

(A letter in my files signed by the Chairman of the Official will finish the story here.)

Then at conference that fall I was asked to fill the Bethel-Azalea charge until Rev. Marion Workman, who had been appointed to the charge could finish his course at Duke. I supplied this charge for 5 months. On this charge were some very loyal church members and wonderful people to work with. I would preach at Azalea at 10:00 a.m. and Bethel at 11:00 a.m., a drive of about three miles. Rev. C. F. Hood was on the East Flat Rock charge and went into the chaplaincy. The Bishop and Presiding Elder asked me to go and fill in until they could secure a regular pastor.I went to work on Sunday, November 11, 1945 - driving from my home every Sunday - preaching at East Flat Rock one Sunday at 11:00 a.m.; Dana at 3:00 p.m.; next Edneyville at 11:00 a.m. and Upward at 3:00 p.m. This I did from November 11, 1945 to March 24, 1946.

Following this I was asked by the D. S., Rev. A. C. Gibbs, and the Bishop to see what the prospects were for a Methodist church somewhere on Haywood Road or near Malvern Hills. After much looking and meeting with the Buncombe County and Asheville District Board, we bought five acres on Haywood Road running back to Belmont Avenue for $8,500 and sold off lots on Belmont and Ormond Avenue. On August 18, 1946, an organization meeting was held. On September 22, 1946 the first service was held in the chapel, now the Groce Funeral Home, with 16 charter

members. On December 26, 1946 the charter membership was closed with 53 members. I served here until conference in 1950.

At the Annual Conference in 1952, Rev. William Blanton was appointed to the Sandy Marsh Circuit. He was still in school at Emory University in Atlanta**.** So I was appointed to take over until Rev. Blanton graduated. So I went to this charge, driving from my home, October 19, 1952 supplying Western Chapel, Little Sandy, Big Sandy, Chestnut Grove and Teagues' Chapel. Here I supplied up to March 29, 1953. Then Rev. Blanton took over. This brings me up to the Beverly Hills Organization (See history prepared by Mrs. Louise Farr.)

7-9-58

(QUIPS)

My first Presiding Elder in Western North Carolina Conference on Waynesville District was Rev. W. H. Willis. We had some wonderful experiences. He told this story on me how a city preacher was sent to a country church to preach one Sunday and a good family was to give the city preacher Sunday dinner. This good woman had a little boy 6 years of age who was told to wait in the kitchen while the city preacher and husband ate dinner, with the understanding he was to have a piece of chicken and pie while waiting. After giving thanks, the good woman started handing the food. When it came to the meats, he turned down the chicken saying he had stomach trouble, then the roast beef and he had same stomach trouble, then she passed the wild baked duck, "No thank you, I dare not." By this time the little 6 year old had finished his chicken and pie and was standing inside the door seeing all this happen. He yelled out, "Mamma, maybe the old fool would suck a raw egg."